(f) whether Fisheries Division has taken any step to arrange a meeting on this matter; and

(g) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Yes, Sir. There are about 198 fishing boats in Pakistan which were detained between October, 2003 and April 2005.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Detention of fishing boats occurs due to their crossing into Pakistani waters. The thrust of the Government's efforts has been to secure early release of apprehended fishermen.

(d) It would not be possible to have an insurance scheme to cover losses arising out of crossing into another country's waters.

(e) Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Safety of Fishermen at Sea the fishermen having mechanised boats are provided with financial assistance for installation of Global Positioning System (GPS) and wireless set. The financial assistance is equal to 20% of the cost limited to Rs. 30,000 per vessel.

These equipments can help the fishermen from not straying into waters of neighbouring countries. The fishermen can also maintain communication with shore.

(f) and (g) Ministry of External Affairs being the nodal Ministry in this regard has been taking up on a regular basis with the Pakistani authorities the release of the apprehended fishermen. In an Inter-Ministerial meeting held in January, 2005, all the concerned State/UT Governments and related associations were advised to ensure that the fishermen confine fishing activities to Indian waters and are sensitized to the perils of violation of maritime borders including possible loss of boats.

Authority for disease surveillance

*193. SHRI R.K. ANAND: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that his Ministry had announced setting up a separate authority for disease surveillance to monitor and check the

prevalence of communicable, non-communicable and pollution-related diseases in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the Indian Council of Medical Research had an on-going Rs. 400 crore Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme; and

(d) the reasons why surveillance and research should not be carried out by the same agency?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS): (a) to (d) The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare is considering setting up National Disease Surveillance Authority to work as a multi-disciplinary organization undertaking surveillance, outbreak investigation and response and related operational research. The Authority will not only monitor the incidence of illnesses but will also prepare response teams and supervise the remedial activities in case of an outbreak.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is implementing a World Bank assisted Integrated Disease Surveillance Project (IDSP) (2004-09) in a phased manner all over the country since November, 2004. This project has an outlay of Rs. 408.36 crores. The project involves the designing and operationalising of a dedicated Information Technology network throughout the country for disease surveillance. This network will assist in decentralized collection of illness statistics and rapid transmission of epidemiological data. Specialised software are proposed to monitor the trigger levels and alerts regarding individual illnesses. The project is receiving assistance from several partners and stakeholders including National Technical Institutions like ICMR, NICD and CBHI etc. ICMR is only involved in the process of surveillance of risk factors of non-communicable diseases and providing technical, assistance to the project.

Though disease surveillance and medical research are closely related activities, the inputs and expertise required for both are very different. Therefore, a research-based organization may not necessarily be best suited for carrying out disease surveillance.